

**Amendments to the claims.**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A semiconductor device comprising:  
a substrate; and  
a molded plastic stiffener component ~~being molded onto and~~ secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element, the stiffener component effective to increase rigidity of the substrate.
2. (original) The device of Claim 1, wherein the substrate is selected from a group consisting of a laminated polymer, a polyimide layer, a bismaleimide triazine (BT) resin, an FR4 laminate, an FR5 laminate, a CEM1 laminate, a CEM3 laminate, and a ceramic metal frame.
3. (original) The device of Claim 1, wherein the substrate has a thickness of less than about 75 microns.
4. (original) The device of Claim 1, wherein the substrate has a thickness of less than about 50 microns.
5. (original) The device of Claim 1, wherein the substrate has a thickness of less than about 35 microns.
6. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the stiffener component has a thickness of less than about 100 microns.
7. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the stiffener component has a thickness of less than about 75 microns.
8. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the stiffener component has a thickness of less than about 50 microns.

9. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the ~~molded~~ stiffener component comprises a thermoplastic material.
10. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the ~~molded~~ stiffener component comprises a thermosetting polymeric material.
11. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the thermal coefficient of expansion of the ~~molded~~ stiffener component and the substrate correspond such that heating expands both the ~~molded~~ stiffener component and the substrate approximately equally.
- 12-15. (canceled)
16. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the ~~molded~~ stiffener component comprises at least one cross member.
17. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the ~~molded~~ stiffener component is in a form selected from the group consisting of a grid, a lattice, a grille, and a web.
18. (canceled)
19. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the ~~molded~~ stiffener component is sized to correspond to at least one of a length and a width of the substrate.
20. (canceled)
21. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the ~~molded~~ stiffener component is structured as an enclosure for containing an encapsulating material therein.
22. (withdrawn) The device of Claim 1, wherein the substrate comprises index holes.

23. (currently amended) The device of Claim 1, wherein the substrate is in reel form.
24. (currently amended) A semiconductor device comprising:  
a substrate comprising a first surface, a second surface, and a periphery; and  
a molded plastic stiffener component secured to the first surface of the substrate proximate the periphery; the ~~molded stiffener~~ component ~~being molded onto and~~ secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.
25. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 24, wherein the stiffener component protrudes from the first surface of the substrate.
26. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 24, wherein the first surface of the substrate comprises a recess and the ~~molded stiffener~~ component is secured to the substrate within the recess.
27. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 26, wherein the ~~molded stiffener~~ component is about level with the first surface of the substrate.
28. (currently amended) The device of Claim 24, wherein the ~~molded stiffener~~ component comprises at least one cross member.
29. (withdrawn - currently amended) A semiconductor device comprising:  
a substrate comprising a first surface and a second surface;  
a first molded plastic stiffener component ~~being molded onto and~~ secured to the first surface of the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element; and  
a second molded plastic stiffener component ~~being molded onto and~~ secured to the second surface of the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.
30. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 29, wherein the first stiffener component and the second stiffener component comprise different configurations.

31. (withdrawn - currently amended) The device of Claim 29, wherein the first stiffener component and the second stiffener component comprise different dimensions.
32. (currently amended) The device of Claim 29, wherein one of the stiffeners stiffener components protrudes from the surface of the substrate, and the other of the stiffeners stiffener components is situated within a recess within the substrate and flush with the surface of the substrate.
33. (canceled)
34. (currently amended) A semiconductor assembly comprising:
  - a substrate having a first surface, a second surface, and a periphery;
  - a die situated on the first surface of the substrate; and
  - a molded plastic stiffener component ~~being molded onto~~ and secured to the first surface of the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.
35. (currently amended) The assembly of Claim 34, wherein the stiffener component is situated at the periphery of the substrate.
36. (withdrawn - currently amended) The assembly of Claim 35, further comprising a second molded plastic stiffener component ~~being molded onto~~ and secured to the second surface of the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.
37. (currently amended) The assembly of Claim 34, wherein the substrate is selected from a group consisting of a laminated polymer, a polyimide film, a bismaleimide triazine (BT) resin, an FR4 laminate, an FR5 laminate, a CEM1 laminate, a CEM3 laminate, and a ceramic metal frame.
- 38-43. (cancelled)

44. (previously presented) A method of securing a stiffener to a substrate, comprising the steps of:

providing a stiffener material and the substrate, the substrate comprising a first surface, a second surface, and a periphery;

applying the stiffener material onto the first surface of the substrate proximate the periphery; and

hardening the stiffener material to form a molded stiffener; wherein the molded stiffener is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.

45. (previously presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of applying the stiffener material comprises a molding process selected from the group consisting of transfer molding, injection molding, and spray molding.

46. (previously presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of applying the stiffener material comprises applying an encapsulating material to the substrate and molding the encapsulating material into the stiffener.

47. (previously presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of hardening comprises at least one of heating the stiffener material, cooling the stiffener material, curing the stiffener material by means of a catalyst, and curing the stiffener material by exposure to radiation.

48. (previously presented) A method of securing a stiffener to a lead frame assembly, comprising the steps of:

providing the lead frame assembly, the lead frame assembly comprising a substrate having a first surface, a second surface, and a periphery, and two or more die situated on the first surface of the substrate;

providing a stiffener material;

molding the stiffener material onto the first surface of the substrate to form a molded stiffener secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element; and

singulating the lead frame assembly having the molded stiffener situated thereon, to separate the two or more die.

49. (previously presented) The method of Claim 48, further comprising, prior to the singulation step, the step of encapsulating at least a portion of the two or more die situated on the lead frame assembly.

50. (previously presented) The method of Claim 49, wherein:  
the stiffener material is molded onto the substrate to provide a boundary at least partially around the die on the substrate,  
the encapsulating step comprises dispensing an encapsulating material onto the die, and  
the molded stiffener is structured to contain the encapsulating material within said boundary.

51. (withdrawn) A method of forming a semiconductor die package, comprising the steps of:  
securing a die to a first surface of a substrate;  
molding a stiffener material onto the first surface of the substrate to form a molded stiffener thereon such that the stiffener is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element; and  
encapsulating the die and the molded stiffener with an encapsulating material to form the semiconductor die package.

52. (withdrawn) The method of Claim 51, wherein the step of encapsulating comprises positioning the substrate with the die and the molded stiffener situated thereon between two mold plates, and removing the package from the mold plates after the encapsulating material has hardened.

53. (withdrawn) A method of forming a semiconductor die package comprising the steps of:  
mounting a die on a first surface of a lead frame;  
molding a stiffener onto the first surface of the lead frame such that the stiffener is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element;  
applying an encapsulating material to the die and the stiffener; and  
hardening the encapsulating material to produce the semiconductor die package.

54. (withdrawn) The method of Claim 53, wherein the molded stiffener provides at least one of stiffening the lead frame, and increasing rigidity of the lead frame.
55. (currently amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:  
a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery; and  
a molded thermoplastic ~~material~~ component secured on the substrate proximate the periphery without attachment with an adhesive element, the molded thermoplastic component ~~material~~ structured to stiffen the substrate.
56. (currently amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:  
a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;  
a molded thermoplastic ~~material~~ component secured on the substrate proximate the periphery without attachment with an adhesive element, the molded thermoplastic component ~~material~~ structured to stiffen the substrate, and  
a die mounted on the first surface of the substrate.
57. (currently amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:  
a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;  
a molded thermoset plastic component ~~material~~ secured on the substrate proximate the periphery without attachment with an adhesive element, the molded thermoset plastic component ~~material~~ structured to stiffen the substrate, and  
a die mounted on the first surface of the substrate.
58. (currently amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:  
a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;  
a ~~molded~~ thermoplastic component ~~material~~ ~~molded onto and~~ secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element, the molded thermoset plastic component ~~material~~ situated proximate the periphery and structured to stiffen the substrate, and  
an element situated along the periphery of the substrate and structured for engagement with a processing mechanism for transporting the substrate.

59. (previously presented) The device of Claim 58, wherein the engagement element comprises a plurality of index holes proximate the periphery of the substrate.
60. (previously presented) The device of Claim 58, wherein the substrate comprises a lead frame.
61. (currently amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:
  - a lead frame comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;
  - a molded thermoplastic component material ~~molded onto and~~ secured to the lead frame along the periphery to stiffen the lead frame, and
  - a plurality of index holes proximate the periphery of the substrate and structured for handling the lead frame by a processing mechanism.
62. (currently amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:
  - providing a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery; and
  - molding a stiffening plastic material onto the first surface of the substrate proximate the periphery to form a molded plastic stiffener component being ~~molded onto and~~ secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.
63. (currently amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:
  - providing a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;
  - applying a stiffening plastic material onto the first surface of the substrate proximate the periphery by a molding process to form a ~~molded stiffener that is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element~~; and
  - hardening the stiffening plastic material on the substrate to form a molded plastic stiffener component that is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.



64. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the step of applying the stiffening material comprises a transfer molding process.
65. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the step of applying the stiffening plastic material comprises a injection molding process.
66. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the step of applying the stiffening plastic material comprises a spray molding process.
67. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the stiffening plastic material comprises a thermoplastic material.
68. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the stiffening plastic material comprises a thermosetting polymeric material.
69. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the step of hardening the stiffening plastic material comprises heating the stiffening plastic material.
70. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the step of hardening the stiffening plastic material comprises cooling the stiffening plastic material.
71. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the stiffening plastic material comprises a catalyst, and the step of hardening the stiffening plastic material comprises curing the stiffening plastic material.
72. (currently amended) The method of Claim 63, wherein the step of hardening the stiffening plastic material comprises curing the stiffening plastic material by exposure to [a] radiation.
73. (currently amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;  
 applying a flowable stiffening plastic material onto the first surface of the substrate proximate the periphery;  
 hardening the stiffening plastic material on the substrate to form a molded plastic stiffener component that is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element;  
 and  
 mounting a die on the first surface of the substrate.

74. (currently amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate comprising first and second surfaces, and a periphery;  
 molding a plastic material onto the first surface of the substrate proximate the periphery;  
 hardening the plastic material on the substrate to form a molded plastic stiffener component that is secured to the substrate without attachment with an adhesive element; and  
 mounting a die on the first surface of the substrate.

75. (previously presented) The method of Claim 74, wherein the step of molding comprises a process selected from the group consisting of transfer molding, injection molding, and spray molding.

76. (previously presented) The method of Claim 67, further comprising encapsulating at least a portion of the die.

77-84. (canceled)

85. (currently amended) A semiconductor device comprising: a molded plastic stiffener component ~~being molded onto and~~ secured to a substrate without attachment with an adhesive element.